

Put the Water Access Plan Into Action





Once the plan has been developed, including goals and objectives, then begin to implement the water access plan. Depending on the goals and objectives that are identified, additional steps may be needed to implement the water access plan. This section will cover the following implementation strategies to help schools achieve the goals and objectives:

- Seek opportunities for funding.
- Gather partners to support the effort.
- Select a water delivery method.
- Identify personnel needs and training.
- Develop water promotion strategies.
- Address sustaining the water access plan long-term.

Key Considerations

Budget for necessary supplies and repairs, and seek additional funding opportunities, if needed.

Schools consider incorporating certain costs involved with improving water access into their annual budgets. Funding may be needed for installation of new water access points (e.g., water fountains, water dispensers, hydration stations), buying cups to be kept at water access points (unless the school has the students bringing their own containers), maintaining water access points (e.g., a water dispenser may require filter changes every few months), testing of drinking water, repair (e.g., old drinking water-related infrastructure), removing drinking water contaminants (e.g., filter certified to remove lead), and supporting labor costs to maintain water sources.^{25,26} If the provision of drinking water in your school is beyond the district's current means, consider including these improvements in the school's long-term school modernization plans as a worthwhile investment.

Other options for funding school water-related programs include the following:

- School food service funds, (if the water access point is in the food service area).
- Federal, state, or municipal funding.
- Foundation grants.
- Partnership with private industry (e.g., reusable water bottle companies).
- Parent Teacher Association (PTA) fundraiser.



Examples of Obtaining Funding for Water Access and Promotion in Schools

- Several public schools in New York City received financial assistance from the city departments of education and health to install water jets in their school cafeterias.
- One school district in California purchased reusable water bottles for students with funding from the California Nutrition Network, a group of local, state, and national partners working to promote increased fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity among low-income communities.
- As part of a pilot program, students and staff in the Los Angeles Unified School District in California received reusable water bottles to encourage water consumption throughout the school day. A well-known maker of reusable bottles donated the water bottles for the program.
- In Utah, a filter manufacturer provides and maintains filters for 18,000 drinking fountains in more than 750 public schools throughout the state at no cost to schools.

Gather partners who could help support this effort.

In addition to key stakeholders necessary to the entire planning and implementation process (e.g., school health councils, parents, community members), there are many people and organizations who share the common goal of promoting access to drinking water.

Key partners may include the following:

Drinking Water Agencies and Associations

- Association of State Drinking Water Administrators
- Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies
- National Rural Water Association
- Rural Community Assistance Partnership
- Water Quality Association
- Water Quality Research Foundation
- Local chapter of the American Water Works Association
- Local water district or local water utility company

Health Professionals, Agencies, and Associations

- Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
- Dentists and other oral health professionals, physicians, and dieticians
- Public health departments

Youth Advocacy Programs and Education Associations

- Youth development programs (e.g., Girls and Boy Scouts, 4H)
- Parent Teacher Associations (PTA)

Others

- School facilities and custodial staff
- State department of environmental protection
- Foundations interested in health issues

Example of Building Partnerships

- Louisville Water and Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky, worked together to create Louisville Pure Tap drinking water fill stations with signage promoting water above the fill stations (produced by Louisville Water).

<http://www.louisvillepuretap.com/>

Choose a water delivery method.

Once you know the current water environment at your school, one potential priority action might be to install new water access points in the school or to retrofit existing fountains. This decision will depend on where the water access points will be located and the available budget. If any construction or remodeling is being considered, involve the school facilities staff in the planning process.

Step 1: Know the available budget.

Although all new water access options will require some initial funding to implement, there is evidence that water provision options that rely on tap water have lower long-term costs.²⁶ In addition, cups (e.g., reusable, recyclable, or compostable) or reusable water bottles for students should be considered in the water access budget. See [Appendix 3](#) for examples of different methods for providing water.

Step 2: Decide where the water access points will be located.

Schools may consider the following criteria when deciding where access points will be located:

- Does the age and layout of the building allow for new access points to be installed?
- Will students have access to the water at any time during the school day?
- Is the potential access point in an area of the school where water may be in higher demand, such as near gymnasiums or lunchrooms?
- Is there access to plumbing for a water source and drainage?
- Is there access to electricity to chill water?
- Is there a solid wall behind the fountain? Solid walls may be more difficult and costly to open for new installations.

Knowing where water access points will be located will help to determine whether a plumbed access point or nonplumbed access point will be the most appropriate. Plumbed access points, such as water fountains and water bottle filling stations and some models of water coolers, require direct access to the building's water pipes, whereas nonplumbed access points (e.g., pitchers) do not require direct access to the water pipes.

Step 3: Consider providing cups or allowing the use of reusable water bottles.

In addition to providing the water source, it is important to consider the types of containers students will use to drink the water. For example, it is recommended that cups be made available at water access locations. Providing cups helps students drink more water.²² Some schools may opt for compostable or recyclable cups to decrease landfill waste. If recyclable cups are provided, it is important to ensure that the school has a system in place to ensure that the cups are recycled properly.

Using reusable water bottles is another option for helping students to drink water at school. Reusable water bottles can help reduce waste from single-use plastic bottles and cups and allows students to have access to water throughout the school day. Students should be reminded to bring their water bottles with them each day, label them with their names, and take them home to be washed regularly.

Identify Personnel Needs and Training.

Depending on how the school chooses to address water access, there are questions related to staffing that will need to be addressed:

- **Is additional staff time needed to maintain existing and new water access points?**
Additional staff time may be needed to maintain existing and new water access points to ensure that they are functioning properly, regularly sanitized and cleaned, have adequate water pressure, and to clean up spills. In addition, school staff can help ensure that cups are available and properly disposed of and refill nonplumbed water sources.²²
- **Is there language in labor contracts related to lifting heavy containers and cleaning or maintaining water fountains, and should such language be included if it doesn't currently exist?**
Food carts can be used to move water dispensers, if needed.
- **What training is needed for school staff?**
School staff may require training on different aspects of providing drinking water in schools. School nutrition staff may require training on how to provide and maintain drinking water access points in the cafeteria in compliance with the sanitary code, including how to disassemble and sanitize new equipment. Principals and other staff (e.g., counselors, physical education teachers, and athletic coaches) may require training on how to promote drinking water among students throughout the school day and during physical activity. Teachers may require training on the health benefits of drinking water and how to promote drinking water among students, such as through inclusion of benefits of water consumption in health education and other subject area lesson plans. Training may also be needed on how to address students who abuse the privilege of having water in the classroom or at recess (e.g., filling the water bottles with other types of beverages). Custodial staff may require training on how to maintain and clean water fountains or water dispensers, as well as perform basic repairs, if needed. Further, local health inspectors may require or recommend additional training for school staff, such as water testing or flushing protocol, if needed.

Develop Water Promotion Strategies.

It is important to promote water for overall health and as a healthy beverage option. Interventions that have improved drinking water access with concurrent education (e.g., by teachers) to change beverage preferences have been more effective at increasing water intake.^{3,22} Promotion efforts may include the following:

- Placing signs or posters near water fountains and dispensers.
- Including messages about the benefits of water in school newsletters and communication materials sent to parents and families.
- Listing water as an available beverage on the school meals menu.
- Including content about water into lesson plans. For example, messages about the health benefits or environmental aspects of drinking water can be included in lesson plans for various subjects (e.g., math, biology, health and other curricula) and for students of various ages.
- Engaging students in water promotion activities. Engaging students in the development of water promotion campaigns can help obtain support from the greater student body. For example, host a competition where students create posters and videos describing why they like to drink water.

It could be helpful to develop a promotion plan. When developing a promotion plan, consider addressing the following:

- **Identify key locations to promote water.**
This could be near water access points, in the school cafeteria, in school hallways, and in the school newsletter and other materials to parents.
- **Determine the audience for the messages.**
Primary audiences can include students, parents, teachers, food service directors, and other school administrators.
- **Determine the key messages.**
Promotional efforts may focus on one or more key messages related to water, including the following:
 - » The importance of water for overall health.
 - » That fluoridated water prevents tooth decay in people of all ages.
 - » Water as the optimal beverage to quench thirst.
 - » The health benefits of replacing calorically sweetened beverages with water.
 - » The quality and safety of tap water.
 - » The environmental benefits of drinking tap water instead of bottled beverages, including bottled water.
 - » The cost savings of drinking tap water compared with other beverages.
- **Determine if there is enough money to support water promotion.**
Funding may be needed to create flyers, fund water promotion contests among students, create placards and billboards, or place posters on buses.

Examples of Water Promotion Campaigns

- Drink Up
<http://www.youarewhatyoudrink.org/>
- Bay Area, California Soda Free Summer
http://www.banpac.org/sugar_savvy_curr/banpac_soda_free_report_12_10_09.pdf
- Rethink Your Drink
http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition/pdf/rethink_your_drink.pdf
- Take Back the Tap
<http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/take-back-the-tap/>
- Water First, Think Your Drink
<http://www.wecanky.com/waterfirstthinkdrink.html>
- Potter the Otter
<http://www.potterloveswater.com/>
- Drinking Water Week
<http://www.awwa.org/resources-tools/public-affairs/public-affairs-events/drinking-water-week.aspx>
- Turlock Unified School District 'Real. Fresh' campaign
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vhIDrWBoGo>

Additional Resources

- California Department of Education.
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/he/water.asp>

Include strategies in your plan to sustain water access once changes in the school are made.

School water champions play an important role in ensuring that water access efforts continue to be implemented. Suggestions for sustaining water access in school include the following:

- **Adding language about water access to district policies.**

All school districts that participate in federal child nutrition program (e.g., National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program) are required to have a local school wellness policy (LWP) that includes goals that promote student wellness. Consider attending the district's school wellness council meetings to discuss the importance of addressing water in the LWP and helping to revise policy language to incorporate water. Examples of language that could be incorporated in a LWP include the following:²⁷

- » Provide all students and employees with access to clean, safe, palatable drinking water free of charge at every district facility, including cafeteria and eating areas, classrooms, hallways, play yards and athletic fields, and faculty lounges throughout the school day and at before- and after-school activities
- » Allow students to bring drinking water from home and to take water into the classroom, provided that the water is in a clear, capped container, such as a water bottle, to prevent spills.
- » Encourage school administrators, teachers, and building staff to model healthy behavior, including drinking tap water.
- » Require repairs to bring school buildings into compliance with state and local plumbing codes and relevant state laws.
- » Establish hygiene standards for water access points, including how often they should be cleaned.
- » Promote water through multiple methods, including providing cups at water access points.



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- **Ensuring that district maintenance and food service policies specify who is responsible for maintaining** the water access points, including the frequency of cleaning and maintaining water fountains or other water sources, the frequency of testing water for contaminants, as well as flushing water outlets after periods of no use, such as weekends or school vacations, and spot checks to ensure implementation of policies.
 - **Promoting water access** by using posters, signs, newsletters, and announcements will encourage students and school staff to continue to use water access points.
 - **Sharing success stories** in the local newspaper, school Web site and social media, newsletters, and school board meetings can help other schools in their efforts to improve access to drinking water.